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THE EFFECTS OF DESEGREGATION UPON SCHOOL DISCIPLINE.

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TO DETERMINE THE EFFECTS OF DESEGREGATION ON SCHOOL DISCIPLINE, PERSONAL INTERVIEWS WERE CONDUCTED WITH A LARGE NUMBER OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND BOARD OFFICIALS, PARENTS, STUDENTS, AND COMMUNITY LAY LEADERS. IT WAS FOUND THAT DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS WERE CAUSED BY THE STUDENT'S INSECURITY AND RESENTMENT AT BEING WHAT THEY CONSIDERED "PAWNS" IN THE RESOLUTION OF A SOCIAL PROBLEM. HOME TRANSFER STUDENTS HAD A NEGATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD THEIR NEW SCHOOL BECAUSE THEIR TEACHERS, WHOSE STATUS IS DEPENDENT ON THE STATUS OF THEIR STUDENTS, WERE HOSTILE TO THEM. NEGATIVE ATTITUDES COULD ALSO BE ATTRIBUTED TO THE STUDENT'S HOME ENVIRONMENT, PARTICULARLY ONE IN WHICH THERE WAS A DOMINANT MOTHER, WHO IN 80 PERCENT OF OPEN ENROLLMENT TRANSFERS WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE STUDENT'S ENROLLING IN A NEW SCHOOL. IN SOME CASES, HOWEVER, STUDENTS HAD A POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD THE SCHOOL BECAUSE THEY REGARDED IT AS AN ESCAPE FROM THE INSECURITY OF THE HOME ENVIRONMENT. PATTERNS OF GOOD SCHOOL BEHAVIOR COULD BE ATTRIBUTED TO THE EXISTENCE OF A COMPETENT TEACHING AND ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF, WHO TENDED TO BE FAR MORE IMPORTANT FOR DISCIPLINE THAN THE PHYSICAL CONDITION OF THE SCHOOL OR THE AVAILABILITY OF SUPPLIES. THIS STUDY WAS PREPARED FOR THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR ADVANCE OF SCIENCE, MONTREAL, CANADA, AND WAS PUBLISHED IN THE "JOURNAL OF SECONDARY EDUCATION," VOLUME 42, NUMBER 2, FEBRUARY 1967. (DK)

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The Effects of Desegregation Upon School Discipline

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The purpose of this study was to determine the effects, if any, of desegregation upon school discipline. One hundred and two schools were selected among those visited as dealing with problems of desegregation of one type or another. Most of these were schools which the researcher had previously visited during the past fourteen years in the study of school discipline but at that time were not faced with the integration and assimilation of different ethnic groups. The conclusions presented here were based upon these visits, personal interviews with two hundred and fifty-seven school administrators, eighteen hundred students, nine hundred parents, lay leaders, school board officials, and community agents, as well as eighty-one group-interviews extending over the past three years. Because of the volatile situation and concern about any publicity on the part of schools where serious problems exist or apparent success has been achieved, the identity of those interviewed and the schools visited has been kept confidential by the researcher. The observations, conclusions, and data were checked with officials and leaders in different parts of the country to make certain that this report would be substantiated by any further research or investigation. The fact that the researcher had made previous visits in former years, and had himself been a teacher and administrator for twenty years before entering university work as well as the confidence maintained in former studies of school discipline made it possible to include schools in some of the most disturbed districts facing this problem. The cooperation, frankness, and assistance of school administrators, teachers, students parents and others were most valuable and made this study possible.

The study revealed that there are different types of schools related to this problem and can be classified as: segregated, desegregated, resegregated, de-facto segregated, pseudo-desegregated or simulated desegregated. Some were at one time boastful and proud of their desegregated programs but at present embarrassed to find that they were now in the process of being once more segregated. Token desegregation or controlled desegregation gave some school officials and community leaders a false sense of being ahead of some others in facing the problem of assimilating different ethnic groups in their schools. Others who thought that they were on the way to solving the problem were disappointed to find that they had only created more serious ones by their hasty and expediently developed programs. Confusion, frustration, and insecurity usually characterized the mental state of the student involved. This in turn resulted in the desire on the part of the students, to strike at something or somebody, but they had an obscure imagery of the ones to blame. It was clear that some of the interviews indicated that certain behavior problems could be directly related to this mental state on the part of students and in a lesser degree to certain

ED 003 320

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teachers and administrators. Three schools which were over ninety percent segregated and had been desegregated by redistricting were now over ninety-eight percent segregated again. Twenty-eight schools visited had attempted desegregation by transfer of students only to discover that their plan had resulted in greater segregation rather than desegregation. The mere fact that a district or school decides to desegregate does not solve the problem. Residence, transportation, school facilities, and other factors are the determinants - whether a school is or will remain truly desegregated.

The program of "open enrollment" or "voluntary transfer" creates another problem because of the mental attitude on the part of the student involved. This in turn had been transferred to behavior patterns which resulted in disciplinary problems in some of the schools visited. It was interesting to discover that the transfer of students under these plans was usually determined by a dominant mother. In over eighty percent of the cases checked it was evident that a student had a dominant mother who had requested and desired transfer. There were almost as many from broken homes as from those where parents were living together. In a majority of transfer cases the parents had initiated and insisted upon transfer. Many of the students interviewed revealed that the transfer created new problems for them. They felt that they were looked upon as foreigners in the schools to which they had been transferred. This was especially true in schools which were some distance from their homes and in neighborhoods where they could attend school but not live. Then too, they were looked upon as "uppity" and "oddities" by their neighborhood groups upon returning home at the end of the school day. They resented being pawns in some bigger social problem which had distrubed their natural pattern of life. This was reflected in their attitude toward schools and anything which identified itself with this new situation they were in at present. As one stated, "We are not really wanted here, and I am not wanted by my old gang at home. As soon as I can find a way out, I'm going to go." A girl who had just been elected to a school office said, "They think I don't see through this. They are using me as a show piece. They elect me and invite me to their homes but my parents can't live here." The efforts on the part of teachers and administrators to make these situations work were in many cases sincere and determined but they confidentially admitted they recognized the transferred student labored under a difficult mental attitude. This in turn would be reflected in disciplinary cases which could be identified as being "touchy" or "egged" on by parents or others not to let any one push them around. Some cases were further intensified by the dominant parent coming to the school or going to some community agency to press their grievances, which resulted in further embarrassment for the student and the group he represented. Many of the transferred students would not have changed school had it not been for a dominant parent or some other adult person. It did not reflect satisfaction with their former school but a choice between the new and old problems they faced. This should not be interpreted as an encouragement for a "do nothing" policy by school officials and school districts but rather as an indication that the student in many cases is a pawn and not the instigator of his transfer. A student lacking an aggressive and dominant parent where "open enrollment" is a policy does not stand the chance to be transferred as the others according to the information collected.

Another factor which affected the behavior pattern on the part of some students were the conditions under which they lived and these they identified with the causes. It is difficult for some to realize under what conditions many of our students are living in some districts and why they don't seem to develop a more positive attitude toward school and those trying to help them. First, we have a group representing one minority being exploited by another minority group

representative by excessive rents and unbelievable living conditions. The despicable slum experience is soon identified with the individual to whom the student's parents must pay the rent and the group he represents. It is not surprising therefore, to find that this "anti" attitude is kindled into greater animosity when the student is enrolled in schools in which he witnesses students representing this group enjoying better clothes, opportunities, and living conditions than he is permitted. Although the students may not be related or even sympathetic to the practices of the landlords of the slums they represent them and as a result the bitterness is deepened. It is not surprising therefore, to find these students participating with enthusiasm in the riots, acts of vandalism, and "anti" campaigns in communities and certain disciplinary problems within the school. As one student who had been in trouble with both school and local authorities and who was exhibiting dangerous leadership for negative groups both within and without the school said, "They march with us in the streets and rob us of high rents for the pig pens we must live in." Although this attitude reflected a minority of those interviewed, the causal relationships between behavior in and out of the school can not be ignored. It appeared during the three years of this study to be getting worse rather than better.

Housing projects and renewal programs, as badly needed as they are, appear not a complete solution. One hundred and nineteen students interviewed revealed an almost deplorable situation under which our students are living in some communities. Boys interviewed disclosed that as soon as school was out they would go directly to their apartments, lock their doors, and stay there until it was time for school the next day. Girls in some housing projects were afraid to walk down the corridor of the floor on which they lived for fear there might be muggers or strangers lurking on the stair wells. Again these were in a minority of all those interviewed living in such projects but too many to ignore. Rather than creating a negative attitude toward school it was reflected in a positive one because the school represented an escape, an oasis in a desert of social insecurity. They enjoyed being in school and wanted to do everything possible to keep it a good place in which to enjoy the few hours of each day. They also looked upon school as a gateway to escape from such adverse conditions under which they were forced to live.

The conditions under which the student lives may be reflected in a positive as well as a negative attitude toward his school. His unhappy home environment in turn, does not always influence negatively his behavior pattern according to the reports by students and school personnel.

The factors within the school which determined the effect desegregation would have in a large part is due to the competence, attitude, and sincerity on the part of school administrators and teachers. It must be reported that some teachers and administrators resented desegregation as much as individuals outside the schools. Desegregation of a school does not necessarily mean a change of heart or attitude on the part of all faculty members. Then too, there is developing a second class citizenship on the part of teachers in some schools. Your status depends upon whom you teach and what you teach. It naturally followed that many transferred students would fall into the middle and lower groups relative to ability and achievement. This identified them with lower status citizenry of teachers in the minds of some staff members. Closely associated with this was incompetence on the part of some staff members which only resulted in greater disciplinary problems because of desegregation. It was sometimes difficult to determine if desegregation or incompetence was the basic reason for the increased disciplinary problems.

This study disclosed that in many desegregated schools the problem was not

between ethnic groups but within the groups themselves. This can be exemplified by one of the schools in the study in which the greatest problem was the conflict between four groups of one race which were divided by where they came from, who their parents were and what occupational group they represented. All of the problems did not exist because of conflicts between ethnic groups within the school. Another cause of disciplinary problems in some of these schools was the conflict between girl gangs within an ethnic group. This also appeared to be on the increase in some parts of the country both east and west. The desire to deface a fellow student created a real problem for some school personnel. The lack of proper attitudes toward groups within an ethnic group is a factor in some desegregated schools.

Interviews with some of the transferred students indicated that they felt their segregated school had better discipline than the ones they were in because of the students' attitude toward their teachers. One best represented this by saying, "We were taught to look upon our teachers with respect not as servants." Another said, "I was shocked to hear students sass their teachers. This never happened in our school." One boy who was attending a desegregated new school with the best of everything said, "These kids just don't appreciate what they have--they should have been in our place, then they would."

There seem to be better relationships and attitudes on the part of students in the desegregated school than was evident in their neighborhoods on the part of their adults. One student said, "If they would just leave us alone we would be all right. They always keep poking their noses into our business." Another said, "We were doing all right until some screw-balls messed it all up." In general, student relationships in school were good.

In contrast to the schools in which incompetence on the part of some of the school officials and teachers was a factor in school discipline, were the schools in which there was every reason for poor discipline but which represented some of the best patterns of school behavior. In one school which had been segregated, desegregated, and resegregated the researcher was impressed with the good behavior pattern and attitude of students toward the school. It was located in one of the worst neighborhoods in the city and tense with racial strife and lawlessness. However within the school, an old building which had been well kept, there existed good teacher and student relationships and attitudes toward work. Although different gangs were active outside of school but represented inside, the school was considered as out of bounds for gang activities. The leaders of four gangs were interviewed as a group as well as individually. They were behind the school because as one put it, "They are trying to help us." Another said, "I have two young brothers and I hope they will never become tied up with gangs as I am, and this school is their only chance." My interview with classes disclosed that English was the favorite subject for many. It was not because they like it but the teachers had convinced them that the only way up was through education and the door through which all must pass to get an education is through the language arts. Classes were kept small and competent teachers were in evidence throughout the school. Although this was an outstanding example it can be matched by many more as what can happen in old buildings, poor neighborhoods and poor environment but with a competent staff of administrators and teachers.

The interviews disclosed that the different programs to desegregate schools were aimed primarily at giving equal opportunity to all students. A careful analysis revealed in some of the districts that the basic difference was not in buildings, course offerings, textbooks and materials used but the teaching staffs. It was observed that in some districts better schools and equipment could be found than in others. However some districts leaned over backward in providing

equal if not better facilities and equipment in some instances in the nonwhite segregated schools. At the same time the lack of the right to attend certain public schools and the feeling that better opportunities were offered in them proved to be an impelling force for certain demands by parents and leaders in some districts. Two significant trends were apparent in the districts visited. The first was an attempt to eliminate the strict segregation because of race or culture, and the second to employ more of the minority groups in some of the schools. Much more transfer of students took place than that of teachers and administrators. The closing of some schools caused another problem for the personnel because it was difficult to place them. In some districts the employment of personnel because they represented certain minority groups rather than the competence needed proved neither a solution to the problem nor fair to the ethnic group represented. Four schools visited were changing the ratio of those representing minority groups to other teachers in response to demands from the minority group leaders themselves. Basically the problem of good school discipline is related to the competence and dedication of the teachers and administrators. Any other basis for selection revealed the introduction of new problems and situations.

The recognition of the need for competent teachers and administrators raised the question of how to select them and get them to teach where their competence is needed. The interviews revealed that the real incentive for students to transfer was to get better teachers and administrators. Some schools were looked upon by teachers as places to teach and endure until one would be lucky enough to be transferred or received tenure. Certain teacher training institutions are developing programs to train teachers to teach in these schools. But students and parents clearly indicated that what they wanted is what every parent wanted, namely competent and dedicated teachers.

The visit to schools clearly indicated that teachers and administrators who knew what they were teaching, how to teach it, and how to motivate students had the best pattern of discipline in their schools. Segregation and desegregation were of secondary importance. Schools in both groups could be identified as representing the best or the worst in school discipline.

Certain suggestions and observations are made at this time although the study is not yet completed. They could be listed as follows:

1. It was observed that desegregation may or may not result in poorer discipline in the school. The competence of the teaching staff, their attitude and interest in minority groups, the mental climate in which the student is working and studying, the challenge and motivation of the program are the major factors

2. The transfer of the hate image on the part of the student to those in the school who represent the ethnic or social group who owns the hovels and tenements in which his parents and group are being exploited must be recognized and dealt with effectively. Ethnic groups must themselves discipline members who misrepresent them or be willing to pay the price. Housing standards and codes must be enforced and the exploiters punished or this will prove to be the greatest breeding place for "anti" and hate campaigns, and open rebellion which we have already witnessed. The hates engendered in the heart and mind of the child cannot easily be erased or changed. The most likely place to develop these is under housing conditions which permit exploitation, filth, and crime. Sometimes the school proves to be the first place where the individual comes in contact with those who represent the ones which he blames and hates although the recipient may be totally

unaware of the reason for such acts and not guilty. The transfer of this hate to other students may cause serious disciplinary problems.

3. Forced transfers or open enrollments usually favor the individual who has a dominant parent. Then too it depends too much upon who you are and what you are whether you will be transferred or not. One school so eager to equal things transported both in and out in order to be fair. However, an analysis of those transferred disclosed that not one child of a board member, teacher, parent association officer, or community leader was involved. When asked about this the administrator said, "You know why. I didn't think you would notice. I hope they don't." Transfer often creates new problems for the student involved. He is a foreigner at school and becomes one to his old group at home after school.

4. Teachers and administrators must be selected on the basis of competence, not who they are or the group they represent. An incompetent teacher is both a misrepresentation of the profession and the ethnic group from which he comes. If a certain group lacks sufficient numbers of qualified applicants an analysis should be made of the causes and a program to remedy the situation inaugurated. It is neither fair to students nor any group to select school personnel on any other basis. To do so will develop problems in school discipline.

5. The real basis for improvement is the transfer of teachers and administrators not students. The location of the school, equipment, facilities, and materials is not as important as competent and dedicated staff members. The solution of this problem will prove more delicate and difficult to deal with than trying to do it by the transfer of students or closing of schools. Interviews disclosed that teachers and administrators recognized this need but hoped that others would be sent. Factors which must be dealt with if such a plan were to succeed according to data collected would be:

   a. Transportation - all teachers could not be expected to live in the community or district.

   b. Time element involved - allowance would need to be made for extra time required in crossing to different parts of the district or city.

   c. Assurance that a staff equal to the one they now are associated with would be provided in the schools to which they are being transferred.

   d. Assurance that there would be some time limit on the period to be served in the school.

The following suggestions are made as a possible solution to the need for transfer of teachers:

   a. Requirement for service in these schools and districts for all promotions to administrative positions. This would make them more understanding when they become administrators. Successful teaching is usually a requirement for promotion. Some of the best administrators in the country have served in such schools and later found the experience valuable.

b. Transportation of teachers from a center or centers with recognition for additional time involved. Teachers can not be expected to drive to and through some of the districts where the schools are located.

c. Incentive increments in salary or sabbaticals in recognition for such service should be provided.

d. Selection on the basis of merit, interest in such service and competence should serve as the criteria for assignment not merely interest on the part of teachers for extra benefits.

e. Transfer of the present staff members in these schools to other schools where they could benefit from the in-service training opportunities would help up-grade the teaching performance.

These suggestions do not imply that there are not now competent teachers and administrators to be found in these schools. At the same time the transfer of the best leaders out of these schools both from the student body and faculty is rendering a disservice to both the schools and the communities. Therefore the transferring of competent staff leadership into these schools to supplement that which is there will make it more attractive for the student leadership to stay where it is most needed. If competent teachers and administrators are the basis of good schools we should strive to provide these where they are most needed. It may cost money but perhaps not a lot more than we are now spending on plans which are not solving the basic needs. If we are sincere about out interest in equal educational opportunity for all and the development of better attitudes, ideals and goals for students of today and parents of tomorrow, cost should not be the first consideration. Our best defense against the development of undesirable attitudes, ideals and conduct on the part of students both in and out of schools in a strong offensive program. This requires among other things the best teachers and administrators in all our schools in all parts of the district or city.